



Maricopa County
Animal Care and Control

GENERAL CAT CARE



Cats are loveable, charming pets that offer endless fun and entertainment. Here are some things to know about caring for your new feline friend.

Tigers, lions, bobcats, mountain lions and domestic cats are all related. Cats have been domesticated for more than 5,000 years, since human beings began to farm and needed cats to kill vermin at home and in grain storage areas.

Before You Bring Your Cat Home

You will need food, food dish, water bowl, interactive toys, brush, comb, cat collar, id tag, scratching post, litter and litter box.

Feeding

An adult cat should be fed one large or two smaller meals each day. Kittens from 6 to 12 weeks need to be fed 4 times a day. Kittens from 3 to 6 months need to be fed 3 times a day. You can either feed specific meals, throwing away any left over canned food after 30 minutes or free-feed dry food (keeping food out all the time).

Grooming

Most cats stay relatively clean and rarely need a bath, but they do need to be brushed or combed. Frequent brushing helps keep your cat's coat clean, reduces the amount of shedding and cuts down on the incidence of hairballs.

Handling

To pick up your cat, place one hand behind the front legs and another under the hindquarters. Lift gently. Never pick up a cat by the scruff of the neck (behind the ears) or by the front legs without supporting the rear end.

Housing

Cats should have a clean, dry place of their own in the house. Line your cat's bed with a soft, warm blanket or towel. Be sure to wash the bedding often. Please keep your cat indoors. Outside, she can contract diseases, get ticks or parasites, be hurt in a fight, attacked by a dog or other animal, be poisoned, become lost or get hit by a car.

Identification

If allowed outdoors (again, we caution against it!), your cat needs to wear a safety collar and ID tag. A safety collar with an elastic panel will allow your cat to break loose if the collar gets caught on something. An ID tag, microchip or tattoo can help insure that your cat is returned if she becomes lost. You should keep a collar with ID tag on your indoor cat too (they could escape out the door).

Play

Cats delight in stalking imaginary prey. The best toys are those that can be made to jump and dance around and look alive. Your cat will act out her predator role by pouncing on toys instead of people's ankles. Don't use your hands or fingers as play objects with kittens. This type of play may cause a biting and scratching problem to develop as kittens matures.

For more information on animal care, behavior or MCACC programs, contact
(602) 506-PETS or visit pets.maricopa.gov
Excerpts from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Cats International.

Litter Box

All indoor cats need a litter box, which should be placed in a quiet, accessible location. A bathroom or utility room is a good place for your cat's box. In a multi-level home, one box per floor is recommended. Avoid moving the box unless absolutely necessary. Then do so slowly, a few inches a day.

Cats won't use a messy, SMELLY litter box. Scoop solids out of the box at least once a day. Dump everything, wash with a mild detergent (don't use ammonia) and refill at least once a week, less frequently if using clumping litter. Don't use deodorants or scents in the litter or litter box.

Scratching

Provide your cat with a sturdy scratching post, at least 3 feet high, which allows the cat to stretch completely when scratching, and stable enough that it won't wobble when being used. It should be covered with rough material such as sisal, burlap or tree bark to further prevent household destruction. To train a cat to use a post, rub your hands on the scratching surface and then gently rub the kitty's paws on the surface. When the cat starts to scratch furniture or rugs, gently say no and lure her over to the scratching post. Praise your cat for using the scratching post. A sprinkle of catnip once or twice a month will keep your cat interested in it.

HEALTH

Your cat should see the veterinarian at least once a year for an examination and annual shots, and immediately if she is sick or injured.

Ear Mites

These tiny parasites are a common problem that can be transmitted from cat to cat. If your cat is scratching at his ears or shaking his head, he may be infested with ear mites. You will need to call for a veterinary appointment, as your cat's ears will need to be thoroughly cleaned before medication is dispensed.

Follow these tips on how to keep your cat healthy and happy.

- Feed them good, nutritious food regularly, at least once a day.
- Cats need plenty of cool, clean fresh water. Adult cats do NOT need milk, which might make them fat and give them diarrhea.
- Do NOT automatically have your cat declawed. To prevent your cat from scratching or tearing your furniture, trim her claws regularly and provide her with a scratching post.
- Unlike dogs, cats do NOT need to be bathed. A healthy cat keeps herself clean and well groomed. The occasional brushing should be enough.
- Unlike dogs, cats do NOT need to go outside. Allowed outside, cats often get lost or hurt and sometimes get killed.
- Make sure your cat always wears identification. Provide her with a collar and an attached id tag with your name, address and phone number on it.
- Make sure your cat gets good veterinary care, including all necessary examinations and shots
- Have your cat spayed or neutered by a veterinarian as soon as possible. Your cat will enjoy a longer, healthier life.
- Give your cat plenty of love and affection. Though cats are more independent than dogs, they thrive on your companionship.

MCACC Animal Care Centers:

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